

Book of Acts Series - Part 35 | Your Potential

by Jim Cymbala

The sermon emphasizes the importance of the Holy Spirit in guiding and empowering believers, and the need to tap into the potential in the body of Christ by loving and supporting one another.

Duration: 44:25

Scripture: Acts 20:37-38, Acts 21:4, Acts 21:10-11, Acts 21:14, Acts 21:24, Acts 21:26, Acts 21:28

Topics: "Book Of Acts"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of recognizing the potential within ourselves and within the body of Christ. He highlights the love and unity among the early Christians as they hugged, kissed, and prayed together. The speaker also emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts and encourages listeners to understand the person and work of the Holy Spirit. He urges believers to break down cultural barriers and love one another, emphasizing the need for encouragement and support within the church. The sermon concludes with a reminder to listen to the leading of the Holy Spirit and to be open to God's guidance in choosing where to serve and minister.

Transcript

When I last spoke to you, we were finishing up Paul's farewell address to the Ephesian elders. And because we have so many visitors, we'll catch you up real quick. Acts was written as the historical book of the birth of the Christian church.

It follows the Gospels, it's written by Luke, who also wrote the Gospel of Luke. And the church was birthed in Acts chapter two when the Spirit of God came upon the believers. And now, former failures who had been trained by Jesus for three and a half years, but they were failures no matter what teaching and modeling they got from Christ.

Because of the day that he was betrayed, the night he was betrayed, they all fled, they all left him. It wasn't until the Spirit came upon them that we see the new Peter, the new James, the new John, which tells us how important the Holy Spirit is because Jesus' teaching itself could not make them what they needed to be. And now the Gospel begins to spread.

And one of the main missionaries or apostles that the book focuses on now is the Apostle Paul, who writes a good part of the New Testament during some of his travels that we're covering now. And he takes missionary journeys from the church, his home base, which is in Antioch in Syria where the civil war is

going on, and he goes out from Antioch, and he travels first all throughout Turkey, and then comes back, called Asia then, and then he goes on his second trip and ends up going to Greece, and the Gospel is for the first time preached and churches are founded in places like Corinth and Athens and Philippi. And then he comes back and he does a third missionary journey, which is now concluded, and in that trip, he spends the longest span of time that we know of in any one place, three years in the great magnet city of Ephesus in Asia, or we would call Turkey.

And after three years there, he goes off back to Greece, he travels and visits some of the churches, always trying to strengthen them, and now he's on his way back to Jerusalem where he knows God wants him to go. He stops and he meets with the Ephesian leaders, and we found out that elder, bishop, pastor, and presbyter all means the same thing, it's the shepherd of God's flock, and he talks to them in a very famous speech in Acts 20 where he models himself, I should say, he puts himself as a model and says, remember how I was with you, what I preached, because now I'm never gonna see you again. And we left it with them hugging him at the beach and kissing him and weeping because they knew they would never see him again, and he was their spiritual father and their leader.

And now he's on his way, sailing from, let's say Turkey is over here where Ephesus is, and now he's going down here to Jerusalem, so he's sailing from west to east in the Mediterranean. The chapter begins, as we're gonna read, covering, Luke is part of the team, and now he's covering how they sailed and where they stopped. It seems insignificant, but nothing in the Bible is insignificant.

Let's look at it. After we had torn ourselves away from them, hmm, that's an interesting term, they loved each other so much, they loved him so much, they had to tear themselves away from them. That was the clinging and the hugging and the emotion.

We put out to sea and sailed straight to Kos. The next day we went to Rhodes and from there to Patara. We found a ship crossing over to Phoenicia, went on board and set sail.

After sighting Cyprus and passing to the south of it, we sailed on to Syria. We landed at Tyre, where our ship was to unload its cargo. Finding the disciples there, what disciples? The Christians, finding that the Christians there, the gospel had gone to that part of the world, we stayed with them seven days.

Through the spirit, they urged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. Through the spirit. One translation has prompted by the spirit.

The believers there urged him, don't go to Jerusalem. There's bad stuff gonna happen there. But when our time was up, we left and continued on our way.

All the disciples and their wives and children, here we go again, and the children accompanied us out of the city and there on the beach, we knelt to pray. After saying goodbye to each other, we went aboard the ship and they returned home. We continued our voyage from Tyre and landed at Ptolemaeus, where we greeted the brothers, Christians again, and stayed with them for a day, just a day.

Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the Evangelist, one of the seven. Let's just hold that for a second. Philip the Evangelist, one of the seven.

One of what seven? In Acts six, when we were reading this, ladies and gentlemen we found out that when they had a problem, the apostles of distribution of food to the widows, remember, there was a little disagreement, the Grecian widows and the Hebrew-speaking widows, and as the church was ministering

to that and sorting that out, the apostles said, wait a minute, God didn't call us to be handing out food to people. That needs to be done, it's important, but that's not our calling. So they chose seven men who were dependable, known to be full of the spirit and wisdom, and they put them over that.

And one of the men was Philip, another one was Stephen, who was later martyred, as we read. So Stephen was a deacon, if you want to call it that. What does deacon mean? Deacon means servant.

Deacons just serve, they get low, and they want to help people. Now Philip is not called a deacon, he's now an evangelist. Who made him an evangelist? Since there were no schools of evangelism, it was obviously the Holy Spirit that made him and gifted him to be an evangelist.

What's an evangelist? Someone who specializes and is gifted to spreading the gospel. So let's go back to the verse. He had four unmarried daughters who prophesied.

After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it, and says, the Holy Spirit says, in this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles. When we heard this, we and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem.

And then Paul answered, why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I'm ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. I'd call that sold out to Jesus. What do you think about that? He said, why are you crying for? I'm not willing just to go to prison, be bound.

I'll die. I'm gonna live forever anyway. Do I get a witness here? I read somewhere in that book that the person who believes in Christ, though he were dead, yet shall he live.

They really took that literally. That was real to them. So Paul says, what are you crying for? Don't break my heart.

I'm ready not only to be bound, no big thing. I'll die if it has to be, if that's his will. So when he would not be dissuaded, we gave up and said, the Lord's will be done.

So why would God inspire Luke to cover these travels and what can we learn about it today, living 2,000 years later? Well, before we get to the main theme of this passage, I'm calling this sermon potential. Potential. And I'll tell you why in a moment.

There's potential in the band. There's potential behind me. There's a potential in the balcony.

There's potential all up here. To be something that we're not, we've never been, we're not now. There's always potential in God if we understand how he develops and looks at potential.

But before we get to that, I just want you to notice something. I guess I was reminded of it in my travels these last two weeks. Do you notice how the Christians loved each other? They're hugging, they're kissing.

They so miss Paul, they can't take it that they're not gonna see him again. They're kneeling on a beach, they're praying. The minute they get to a city, Paul coming back, he stops in Tyre.

Who does he look for first? First thing, where are the Christians? We gotta hang with them. Then they stop someplace else for a day in Ptolemaeus where they find the brothers, the sisters. Gotta hang with the

Christians.

When they get to Caesarea, they get right to Philip the Evangelist's house, believer. There, they're praying and encouraging each other. Again, I wanna say to someone, I was encouraged that I got a email from someone from another part of America who said, you mentioned something a few weeks ago about being a loner and not being part of the body of Christ and that when you've been hurt in life by people, you can isolate yourself.

I got very convicted because I felt you said that for me. And I realized that I have to let these walls down and I have to let Christians love me and I have to love Christians because God sets the lonely in families. This is our family here.

In heaven, you might not be, hopefully so, with your biological family, but this is the family we're gonna spend eternity with. Can we say amen to that? Back in those days, they really loved each other and clung to each other and encouraged each other and needed each other for support. And I wanna say to the people behind me and I wanna say to you, the idea that God saved you just to go to a building once a week on Sunday, that is so ludicrous that I don't even like to say that sentence.

That's crazy. He did not save you to just go to heaven one day and go to a building once a week. He put you in a family.

We have brothers and sisters who need your encouragement. You can't isolate yourself. If you have a race or a culture that's different than what's around you right now, let it go, drop the culture thing and just start loving people because we all need each other and no matter what our background is and what color our skin is, underneath, we all bleed the same way.

We all need love the same way and when I see how they clung to each other and encourage each other and as I saw it on my recent travel, I said, you know, especially in a church this size with three meetings and maybe 10,000 people coming on a Sunday in and out of this building and then more on Tuesday, it's so easy to be impersonal and isolate yourself and be mingling with no one and that's bad for you. That's bad for you because iron sharpens iron. We need each other.

I need the pastors. The pastors need to fellowship with me. We're just talking at the end, Pastor Hammond and I, that I wanna get together with the pastor.

We're gonna go out and have a dinner together in April because even though we're always mingling and talking and discussing problems, we just need to fellowship with each other. I need that. You need that.

So if you're here today and your Christian concept is just go to church in a rigid way and then go home and keep your business to yourself. I'm not letting my business out in the street and all that stuff. Drop it.

Drop it. This is what the body of Christ is for. We need to love each other and pray with each other and kneel on a beach with each other just like they did back then.

Someone has said that you can't understand the book of Acts except you understand the person and the work of the Holy Spirit. Certainly, this little chapter that we've read, these 11, 14 verses, highlight that, doesn't it? Because we see now the Holy Spirit working in ways that a lot of us are not used to. We hear sentences, just like it's strange and they clung to Paul and wept and kissed him and said, oh, we're not gonna see you again.

That kind of emotion and relationship is not common to a lot of us in the body of Christ. It's more the little, the American thing of I build my wall and people are over there and I keep to myself. Now we're gonna see sentences and things happening that we don't identify a lot of us with the church.

Some of you visiting here today or watching on the webcast, you're gonna say, I don't even know what that's about, and yet God put it in the book of Acts as our model. He didn't put this in the book of Acts so that we should ignore it. He put it because he said, this is the way my church operates.

Remember, the Brooklyn Tabernacle is not Pastor Jim's Symbolist Church, it's Christ's church. All churches belong to Christ because he's the one who died on the cross, rose again, and he said, I will build my church. I'm not, I'm gonna build your church or you're gonna build my church, but I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

But the church of Christ has to be built the way Christ wants his church to be built. I can't impose my vision, my tradition, my American culture, I'm half Polish, I'm half Ukraine. Boy, they're running over my people over there, aren't they? But that's another whole point.

But I can't impose my culture or wherever you're from. You have to drop your culture and submit your culture to the word of God and say, how does God want his church to be run rather than this is the way we do things in America because Jesus is not American. He's not Chinese, he's not Korean, he's not anything.

He's the son of the living God. And the Christian church is a spiritual organism, not a political organization. The church of Christ is a spiritual organism and the life and the power of it is not in human wisdom but in the person and power of the Holy Spirit.

So let's just see what's happening here because this is a much debated part of the book of Acts. Why? There seems to be a contradiction in the book of Acts here. So Paul is sailing back with his team to go to Jerusalem.

So he's sailing from west to east and he stops at Tyre. And now some believers are there. He's the apostle, they're the believers.

And somehow as they're mingling, praying, singing, doesn't tell us, prompted by the Holy Spirit, some of the Christians there say to him, no, no, don't go to Jerusalem. It's something bad gonna happen there. How do they know that? By the spirit.

How do they know to tell Paul that? By the spirit. Remember, the Bible tells us God sent his son into the world. Jesus accomplished his work, which was to die on the cross, show that he was the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

And after he rose from the dead, he went back to heaven, mission accomplished. But he said, I'm gonna leave you alone. I'm gonna send the spirit.

In fact, it's good for you that I go because when I go, I'm gonna send the spirit. So the spirit is just as much a person as the Father and the Son. And in the mystery of what we call the Godhead or the Trinity, we have one God expressing himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The difference with the Holy Spirit is, although he's just as much a person as the Son, he's invisible. Jesus was visible and he walked with his disciples. But he said, a day is coming when the spirit will come.

He won't walk with you, he'll be in you. He will empower you and you'll be able to do things you never did when I was with you. That's how important the spirit is.

But we're living in a day, for a number of reasons, which I might refer to, where we've shortchanged the Holy Spirit. Some churches, really, although they might say they believe in the Bible, in real life, they deny the existence of the Holy Spirit. They carry on as if there was no such person as the Holy Spirit.

They call themselves Christian, they mention Christ, but they're so far removed from the way people looked at things 2,000 years ago, the early Christians, who we should model, that they're really spirit deniers. It came to me last night in prayer, I just was thinking, the Bible says Jesus came unto his own and his own received him not, speaking of the Jewish people, right? He came unto his own and his own received him not. In many ways, the spirit was sent by Jesus to the church, and his own received him not.

The Holy Spirit has a lot of windows and doors shut to him in many places, and even in our individual lives, because we're not used to some invisible person. It sounds spooky, it sounds weird, and then there's all the excesses of people doing weird things in the name of the spirit. And so we recoil at it, and we say, that doesn't sound like Jesus.

And they say the spirit is doing it. Oh, I don't wanna know about that, it's all crazy, it's wildfire, it's holy roller stuff. And yet, what will we do with the Bible? Paul is in this place, and believers are now telling him, prompted by the spirit, don't go, there's trouble.

How would they know that? By the spirit. What would give them the authority to say that to him? By the spirit. He leaves them, and there's the question in our mind, are they telling him he shouldn't go because he shouldn't go? Or are they telling him he shouldn't go because they foresee by the spirit there's gonna be problems, and they love him? That's the general understanding of it.

Because when he got converted, the Lord sent someone to him immediately and said, tell Saul of Tarsus, who later became the apostle Paul, I wanna show him what great things he must suffer for my name's sake. It just so happens that the apostle Paul had a unique calling of suffering and persecution on his life, unlike anyone else in the New Testament that we read of. Just like Christians in certain countries go through more than, let's say, we do in America.

It's different being a Christian in Pakistan than it is being a Christian in Bolivia. They go to another place and stay for a day, and now they end up in Caesarea, and they go to Philip the Evangelist's house. Well, how in the world did he get to be an evangelist? Where's his certificate? They had no certificates.

They had no licensing, they had no ordination. He was now an evangelist because God had used him by the spirit. The spirit so anointed him and empowered him, and he had won so many people to the Lord that they now called him Philip the Evangelist.

But he's a deacon. No, you're just a deacon when God wants you to be a deacon, but if God promotes you, you're an evangelist. The gifting comes from God, because the Bible says God has said in the church, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists.

Nobody can make anyone an evangelist but God. And he has now been empowered and anointed as an evangelist. The spirit has done it, and everyone recognizes it.

But now it gets more complicated, because while they're staying at his house, we find out he has four daughters who have never married, and they prophesy. That's so weird to our Western minds, isn't it? Not too many churches would talk about, oh, go to this sister, or you're gonna, there's someone in the choir, and they prophesy. What is prophecy? It's not adding to scripture, number one.

It's some kind of inspired speech which is different than preaching. The idea that a prophet was merely just a preacher really is weak reasoning. Someone who prophesies receives from God, the Holy Spirit, the ability to speak out either what God is saying to a situation at a given moment, or sometimes to even foretell something that's gonna happen, as Agabus does in this same little scenario.

Someone has argued, and very weakly, in my judgment, no, now that we have the New Testament, see Pastor Cimbala and congregation, they didn't have the New Testament back then, but now that we have the New Testament books, there's no need for any prophets. But notice what Agabus and anyone else said to Paul previously, they weren't giving doctrine, they weren't saying pray to the saints, they weren't saying Jesus is never coming again, they weren't giving doctrine, they were giving direction. They were speaking a personal word to someone, and saying, thus saith the Lord.

Not adding to the Bible, the Bible can never be added to. And all people who supposedly prophesy have to be judged by the word of God. The scripture tells us, test the spirits to see whether they be of God.

So when someone walks up to you and says, God gave me a word, or I wanna speak something, you can listen to it, but what you're checking is, you're not only trying to discern where it's coming from, but does it contradict the Bible? If it contradicts the Bible, you get them out of there quick. Because God will never contradict what he's already written. But this is not that kind of truth.

Nowhere in the scripture does it say, don't go to Jerusalem. Nowhere does it say, whoever wears this belt is gonna be bound by the Jews and handed over to the Gentiles. Earlier in this book of Acts, we read where Paul wanted to go and evangelize somewhere, but the spirit told him, don't go.

Well, why wouldn't you wanna go if you wanna spread the gospel? Because the spirit said, don't go, I have someone else to do that, I want you elsewhere. That's the way the early church ran. Not by human coordination and organization, but by the spirit's leading.

You say, but Pastor Simba, that's dangerous. I've met some wacky people who say they're led by the spirit. You're right, I have two.

But that doesn't take away from the fact that there's the real. Just because there's a false gospel doesn't mean there's not a real gospel. But the enemy wants us to throw out the baby with the bathwater.

So he has four daughters who prophesy. What do they say? We don't know. But they were used by God to speak God's word in some inspired way, either speaking to a given situation or to even foretell some event.

By the spirit. They weren't educated to do this. No one could teach them to do this.

This is what's called the giftings of the Holy Spirit. Before we get to Agabus, who joins the story now, I wanna point out something to you. Do you notice that because of the Holy Spirit, believers can give words to an apostle? Paul was warned in the first place he went by ordinary believers who weren't afraid that he was an apostle because what they were giving him was something from the spirit that's above everyone.

So notice the equality in the church. In the last days, Joel says, I will pour out my spirit, God says, in the prophet Joel, upon all flesh. And my sons and my daughters will prophesy.

In the Old Testament, the spirit just came on certain people. But in the New Covenant, once we know forgiveness of our sins through Jesus Christ, every one of us has the spirit living in us. And every one of us should want more of the spirit's control of our lives and to be used more by the Holy Spirit.

This is not something you'll find in the Old Testament. There were prophet here, prophet here. There was a David, there was a Joseph, there was whoever.

But no, now Paul stops someplace and he doesn't say to them, who are you to tell me anything? I'm the apostle, who are you guys? No, by the spirit, God can use anybody to speak a word to anyone else. Now what other passages we have about women speaking in the Bible? There are obvious problems with women maybe speaking out and being boisterous in the meeting or asking questions inappropriately, and there's some verses that are problematic about that, women keeping silent in the church. There is no justification to say that women can't speak in the church because Philip's four daughters prophesied.

Well, where in the world did they prophesy except among Christians? For 1 Corinthians 12 and 1 Corinthians 14 should be studied carefully in this regard. Prophecy is not a gift that you'd use at home like speaking in tongues and praying in the spirit, primarily at home to be edified. And if it's done publicly in a way that would stop the meeting or draw attention to itself, it must be interpreted because the people have to be encouraged.

And you can't be encouraged if you don't understand what's being said. But prophecy is in the language of the people, and these four daughters prophesied. So obviously, women are mightily used by God just like men can be.

In fact, the Bible says in the last days I'll pour out my spirit upon all flesh, my sons and my daughters will prophesy. So now there's no more gender distinction in Christ. In Jesus Christ, there's neither male nor female, Jew nor Greek, there's no Asian people with God, there's no white people with God, black people.

We're all available to be used. Let's put our hands together and say amen to that. So notice what we've learned here.

The everyday believer can be used by God even to help an apostle, why? Because the spirit is using them. The spirit trumps everything. Here's four women who were used by God, how were they used by God? They weren't evangelists, they weren't pastors, it just says they prophesied.

They had a walk with God and a closeness with God and a gifting from God where they could speak words into the congregation or a person, speaking what God was saying about a certain situation at a given moment. To many of us, what are you talking about? That's not the kind of church I went to in Trinidad. That's not what I go to in Georgia.

I didn't grow up with that, what are you talking about? That's the point. One of the reasons that Christianity is sagging in America is because we've gone to programs and being clever rather than trusting the power of the Holy Spirit. Instead of believers wanting more of God and saying, God, use me, we've gone into spectator Christianity where you all sit there and everything's performed up here and maybe you'll come back next week if you like it and the meeting doesn't go too long and then you come in and it's a spectator sport.

It's like going to Barclays Center or the Garden or Radio City Music Hall, but that is totally unfounded in scripture. The Bible says we're all members of a body and God wants to use every one of us in a different way to help other people. How does he do it? By the Spirit.

You could drop out in the sixth grade and be able to speak to a professor by the Spirit. You could be a blessing, an encouragement to anyone, a different race. No, you don't understand my culture.

The Spirit understands your culture and the Holy Spirit can use any of us any way. Amen, let's say amen to that. We're learning a lot now.

They were primitive, but they have something we don't have. We have PowerPoint and lights. They had God.

Mm. How many vote for God there? Now Agabus comes and he's called a prophet, not a pastor. He has some gift from God where he speaks the word of God in some inspired way.

Notice all prophets have to be tested. Just because someone says I have a word from you doesn't mean anything. You listen to it.

If someone ever tries to give you a private word in this church, you call quickly for one of the elders or one of the deacons and we'll listen because it's best to have someone listening when someone talks to you like that. And then you can judge it. But always remember this, God will never show anything to anyone else about your life and keep you in the dark.

God will never show Pastor Hammond something about me and I don't get it myself. That will never happen. Or vice versa, me speak to him.

So it has to bear witness with you and it's good to have two or three who confirm it. But all kinds of crazy things have been done under quote prophecy. Many years ago, people in a certain time of so-called revival, everyone started prophesying.

And you can see that it's the abuse of it that just ruins it. But we can't give up. We have to teach and be patient and ask God for clarity.

So people were giving personal words to other people and my late father-in-law told me about someone went and had a word for a couple and said you shall leave your job right away and go to China. And you will be mightily used and all these grandiose terms supposedly inspired and you will leave and God will be with you and all of that. So after the prophecy was over, the person said but I don't understand Chinese.

I don't speak Chinese. No, when you land, when you land, thus sayeth the Lord, when you land, you will begin to speak Chinese. You will go ni hao and all that, a lot of other stuff.

And these gullible people did it. They were no more called than you and I are called to do brain surgery. And they never learned Chinese supernaturally.

And their faith was broken and they lost their marriage in the end. That's why the Bible says God does supernatural things but try the spirits, test them to see whether they be of God. Another reason, don't be a lone ranger.

Be close to the body of Christ. People who so-called get words and nobody confirms it. I stop people in my office.

The minute they told God told me, I go stop. Now I can't disagree with you because you already got God on your side. I'm not talking to you then.

No, but God told me. No, no, say you think God is leading you. Do not say God told you because then no one can talk to you.

God does lead people. But we gotta have a little humility about the whole thing. He shall guide the meek in the way that they should go.

In the mouths of two or three witnesses, let everything be established. So now Agabus comes as we close and he says, thus saith the Spirit of God. What a powerful thing.

In most churches, in most churches in America, even though that's in the Bible and they say, I believe in the Bible, I believe in the Bible. I believe in the Word of God. You just have anybody say, thus says the Spirit of God and they'll have you out and they'll exit you quickly from that building.

And yet it's in the Bible. What are we to do with it? Notice he's not adding scripture. That's a weak kind of cop-out to me.

This is not doctrine. This is a personal word much needed in our lives because we're making decisions and haven't you ever wanted to know which way God wanted you to go? I mean, the missionaries who go out, the churches that start in China, how do they know what town to go to? Do they just pick it? I was talking to Will Graham, who I wanted to come and preach here. This is Billy Graham's grandson, has quite a gift as an evangelist.

And he was telling me, he said, you know, Pastor Simula, we really need to pray more where we go to do our festivals and what cities we go to because God knows where all of us need to be. How many still believe that, that God knows where we need to be and he wants to show us? Lift your hand if you're like a fanatic, right? We're fanatics. Notice if there's anything taught here, the Spirit is alive.

The Spirit is speaking, not inspiring new verses. He's speaking, he's leading, he will, as Jesus said in the book of Revelation seven times, he that has an ear, let him what the Spirit is saying. Listen, Jesus said, not what I'm saying, he that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying.

You know, when I just said that, God is quickening some of our ears, the ears of our heart. So Agabus runs over, kind of like an Old Testament prophet would, and he gets a physical object and he says, whoever this belt belongs to is gonna go to Jerusalem, and he bound himself with it, and he said, just like I'm binding myself with this belt, whoever this belt belongs to, when they go to Jerusalem, they're gonna be bound and handed over to the Gentiles. It probably was a preparatory word.

Saying to Paul, I wanna encourage you again, be ready. Don't be disappointed, get ready, get your faith strong, because it's not gonna be easy there, but I'm gonna use the difficulty, as we'll see, in the weeks to come, to spread the gospel to other places. And when Agabus prophesied, that's about the future, then they all went nuts and started begging Paul, Paul, please don't go, please don't go.

But Paul said, what are you breaking my heart for? I'm ready not only to go to prison and be bound, I'll go down for Christ. He died for me, so why shouldn't I wanna die for him? I told you about that first visit I made to Hong Kong when I heard these pastors singing in Mandarin. I already told you about that song.

Those of you visiting, oh, that was an eye-opener for me. I'm on the sideline with my interpreter, and all hundreds are praising God. I'm there with Rabbi Zacharias, my friend, and they're praising God in Mandarin.

And I said to my translator, I love that melody. What is that song? And they said, he went, wait, wait, shh, don't even move here, just stay still. And he went, oh, it says this.

Dear Jesus, we love you that you came and died on the cross for us, and since you died for us, we will die for you. Since you gave your life for us, we are ready to give our life for you, for we love you, Jesus. Thank you for giving your life for us.

Not your typical Sunday morning praise and worship song here in America, but we end up with not Paul's dedication. What I want to end up with is your potential. Everybody here in this building, you know what your potential is? As big as God the Holy Spirit is.

If you and I say to God today, God, I don't want to have Christianity in a box. I want your spirit to lead me, guide me. I don't know what your plan is for my life, but I want to live outside the box.

I want to live with the flow of the Holy Spirit. I want to be a blessing to other people because the Spirit's giving me words and prayers and so on and so forth. I remember a woman in the choir giving birth to a baby many years ago, 16, 17 years ago, and the doctors warned her, this baby, there could be problems.

She was a little older to have children, and they said there could be problems. So they sent me a message on a Tuesday. Pray for so-and-so because she's gonna have a baby in there and I handed the microphone to this woman over there, second on the front row, and I remember when she took that microphone.

That was no more her praying. Karen, at that time, Melendez, that was no more her praying. That was God the Holy Spirit helping her to pray.

She had an authority. She had faith. She lifted the whole congregation up.

For it's not by might, nor by power, nor by education, nor by IQ, but it's by my Holy Spirit, saith the Lord. Listen, he can teach us to pray. He can teach us what words to say.

He can lead us in the decisions of life. You know what he's looking for today? Not intelligence. He knows everything already.

Someone says, I need a PhD, then God will use me. If that's the way he's leading you, get the PhD. But trust me, he knows everything anyway.

All he's looking for is availability. Everybody lift your hands with me. Lift them up.

That's a sign I need you, Lord. That's a sign of I worship you, Lord. It's also a sign of I love you, Lord.

But the hands being reached out right now is also saying, Holy Spirit, come. Before we sing something, I just want to pray. Father God, with my hand up in the air, I just want to pray now on behalf of all of us and for this church.

We want the Brooklyn Tabernacle to be full of the Holy Spirit. I want the members of the church and those who come here regularly, we want to be filled and moved upon by the Holy Spirit. We want to be prompted, stirred, led, inspired, anointed, all by the Holy Spirit.

Father God, you gave us your son Jesus, and now Jesus, we ask more, more, mas y mas of your spirit in our lives. Our hands are still up, Lord, because we're hungry for you. You may put them down, close your eyes.

I feel like praying with some people today. I feel like praying with some people who say, Pastor, your word stirred me, because I realize why I've been shortchanging myself, too old, too young, not educated enough, not this, not that, and now I realize that's not the way God planned it to be. I really am thirsty for the spirit of God.

I need him. Maybe you're facing some decisions right now. You need his direction.

Maybe there's a desire in you, not necessarily leaving your job, but there's something in you that's saying, I want to be more of a blessing to people, but I realize it's gotta be the spirit controlling me more than I've ever known. If you're here, you feel that way, quickly get out of your seat and just come up here to the front. Come quickly.

I'll dismiss the rest in one moment. Don't anyone move except people coming to the front. Just come quickly.

Holy Spirit, before we came downstairs from my office, the prayer band and the pastors, we invited you, and you have come this morning in the praise and worship, in everything we've done, and we ask now that you will minister to those who are specially hungry for you today. Some need an answer, direction from you. All of us need more of your grace.

I confess to you, Holy Spirit, that I am helpless without you. I can't love without you. I have no strength without you.

I can't preach without you. I don't know what to do without you. I publicly represent the people by saying, we need you, Holy Spirit.

Break down our pride. Take away our self-sufficiency. Save us from fanaticism, but save us from death, too.

Save us from tradition, ceremonialism. But I confess with my mouth today that not only is Christ alive, the Spirit of God is alive on planet Earth. Lord, for those who have to go, some of us need to just stay and stand in your presence, but for those who have to go, be with them.

But Lord, we here in the front, we just want to reach out to you and wait on you. Come and do a work, please. Do something fresh in our lives, please, Holy Spirit.

Some of us are so tired of what? The same old, same old. We want you to breathe on us in a new way. We want you to change us from the inside out.

We want to see signs and wonders done in the name of Jesus through the power of the Spirit. Others might laugh and mock us and say, there's a bunch of crazy people, but God, we know your word. We trust your word.

And what you promise, we want to experience. Don't rush, don't rush. If God is dealing with you, just go for it, just go for it.

As the band plays choir, just turn choir and pray for each other, pray for each other. Anybody in the balcony that wants to just turn to someone, say, come on, pray with me. Downstairs, say the same.

We're praying for them in the front. Say, God, send your Spirit upon my brother and my sister.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/25/SID25437.mp3>

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